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French patience snapped by Soviet snooping on high-tech industries and military bases

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In the mid-1970s, radical newspapers in West Europe took pleasure in printing lists of the names of Central Intelligence Agency agents hiding under diplomatic cover. Among the publications was a far-left French daily, *Libération*, which published the names of 40 alleged CIA agents in Paris in January 1976.

Seven years later, *Libération*, now transformed into probably the best French morning newspaper, has turned the tables. In the wake of the expulsion of 47 Soviet diplomats, journalists, and commercial staff from France on April 5, the paper came out with an intelligence report listing 30 Soviet envoys in France as agents for either the KGB (state security police) or the GRU (Soviet military police).

The list makes tantalizing reading. The top KGB man in France, identified by other sources apart from *Libération*, is named as Nikolai Chetverikov, No. 3 man at the Soviet Embassy here before he was expelled

on April 5. One of his companions on the Aeroflot airliner that flew the expelled men and their families back to Moscow was the Paris bureau chief of the Tass Soviet news agency, Oleg Shirokov. According to the report by France's counterespionage organization, the Directorate of Territorial Surveillance (DST), Mr. Shirokov is also a member of the KGB.

The GRU chief was named as naval attaché Vasily Golitsyn. The report was drafted in 1980 and, says *Libération*, was regularly updated.

No sooner had the report appeared than French intelligence sources sought to downplay its importance. But what was clear was that French counterespionage agencies have known about the extent of Soviet spying operations in France, and the names of diplomats involved, for at least three years. However, the French government chose not to take any action until the spectacular mass expulsions on April 5.

One explanation for the previous inaction was given some years ago by a former head of counterespionage, Jean Rochet, who accused the French

Foreign Ministry of winking at the clandestine activities of Soviet diplomats.

But the extent of Soviet spying on France's advanced military and industrial technology grew to such proportions that President François Mitterrand decided to act. Although they will not officially disclose exactly what the 47 expellees are accused of, the French authorities insist that they have detailed proof of their guilt. Informed sources said the Soviet diplomats and commercial attachés had shown strong interest in high-technology developments by French firms.

On the military side, Soviet agents are understood to have been particularly keen on gathering information about French naval installations in the Mediterranean. Their main target was the large naval base at Toulon.

France has recently refused Soviet requests to be allowed to send ships to Toulon for repairs, fearing they would gather information about the base. With their ships kept out, the Soviet agents from Paris were left to gather what information they could about French naval operations.